

SPENDING OPIOID SETTLEMENT PROCEEDS: CHOICES AND CHALLENGES FOR GOVERNMENTS (UPDATE)

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INTRODUCTION

In 2014, several U.S. cities and counties filed lawsuits against drug manufacturers and distributors, alleging that the companies' aggressive marketing practices fueled a national opioid addiction epidemic that subsequently killed hundreds of thousands of people.¹ Since then, more than 3,000 state and local governments filed lawsuits of their own, seeking to recoup the billions of dollars that these entities spent—and continue to spend—on the fallout from the epidemic.² The result of these legal efforts is a series of ongoing monetary settlements, greater than \$58 billion to date,³ on a scale not seen since the Big Tobacco settlements of the 1990s.⁴ Companies that are party to the settlements are gradually distributing funds to state and local governments each year, allocated according to the terms of their settlement agreements with those governments. Payment of these settlements will last 18 years, but the first tranches of funds were distributed to state and local governments starting in 2022. The decision-making authority for spending these funds differs among jurisdictions, and many have an appointed advisory board that disburses specified amounts each year for specified purposes.⁵ In some states, the funds are managed by the state attorney general or other official or are subject to the ordinary appropriations process. Analysis of spending from 2022 to 2024, the most recent data for which a detailed, comprehensive report of spending across all states is available, provides an early picture of how these governments are making use of these settlement funds. In 2021, the Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association (LAPPA) released the Model Opioid Litigation Proceeds Act that provides a template for states to ensure that settlement funds are reliably allocated toward opioid remediation.⁶ LAPPA released an updated version of the model law in May 2026.

In this fact sheet, LAPPA details how opioid settlement proceeds are being disbursed to state and local governments, how those governments are choosing to spend those funds, and the obstacles that can prevent these funds from helping those who have been affected by the opioid epidemic.

TRACKING SETTLEMENT SPENDING

During the first round of payments in 2022 and 2023, state and local governments received more than six billion dollars from the settlement funds.⁷ To ensure that this money would be used to address local opioid epidemic needs rather than be put into governments' general funds, the national settlement agreements set forth restrictions on how the settlement funds may be spent.⁸ These agreements generally mandate that, as a condition of accepting the funds, governments must use 85 percent of the proceeds for opioid remediation and 70 percent specifically for future

¹ Jan Hoffman, "Companies Finalize \$26 Billion Deal with States and Cities to End Opioid Lawsuits," *New York Times*, February 25, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/25/health/opioids-settlement-distributors-johnson.html>.

² National Association of Attorneys General, "Opioids," 2025, <https://www.naag.org/issues/opioids/>.

³ Christine Minhee, Opioid Settlement Tracker, "The Official Opioid Settlement Tracker Tally," accessed September 2026, <https://www.opioidsettlementtracker.com/globalsettlementtracker>. This \$58.6 billion total is as of April 2026, the most recent update to the settlement tracker.

⁴ Hoffman, "Companies Finalize \$26 Billion Deal."

⁵ Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association, *Opioid Litigation Proceeds: Summary of State Laws*, November 19, 2025, <https://legislativeanalysis.org/opioid-litigation-proceeds-summary-of-state-lawsary-of-state-laws/>.

⁶ Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association, *Model Opioid Litigation Proceeds Act*, May 14, 2026, <https://legislativeanalysis.org/model-opioid-litigation-proceeds-actact/>.

⁷ Kerry Breen, "Opioid Crisis Settlements Have Totaled over \$50 Billion. But How Is That Money Being Used?," *CBS News*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/opioid-crisis-settlements-have-totaled-over-50-billion-how-is-that-money-being-used/>.

⁸ See the settlement documents on the National Opioid Settlements website for specific details regarding restrictions: <https://nationalopioidsettlement.com/>.

opioid remediation.⁹ Additionally, as of November 2025, 39 states and the District of Columbia have enacted laws that further specify the range of permissible expenditures that address the specific needs of the state in addressing the opioid crisis.¹⁰

Although tracking how much money state and local governments have received is a fairly straightforward task, identifying precisely how that money is being spent is more of a challenge. Under the national settlement agreements, governments are required to report any spending used for purposes other than opioid remediation to the settlement administrator and make that information public, but the agreements do not mandate comprehensive public reporting for general remediation spending.¹¹ Over the last few years, 33 states, the District of Columbia, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have passed legislation that requires certain entities, including local governments, opioid litigation advisory councils, and the individual or entity charged with making disbursements from opioid litigation settlement funds, to make annual reports (usually to the governor and legislature) regarding settlement funds and disbursements made for the prior year.¹² In 2023, 12 states made commitments in writing to disclose every dollar spent from settlement funds, either as a stipulated condition of the settlement agreements, as required by statute, or through public statements by state officials.¹³ However, by late 2024, just seven had kept those commitments: Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New Jersey, and Oregon.¹⁴ Most U.S. jurisdictions have disclosed a significant portion of their spending, though with varying levels of specificity. According to a 2024 report, in 16 states, 30 percent or more of remediation spending is unreported.¹⁵

In January 2026, KFF Health News, the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, and the non-profit organization Shatterproof released a database that now identifies over 10,500 expenditures of opioid settlement proceeds in 2024, an update of their similar research covering 2022 and 2023.¹⁶ Their research found that, of the \$6.5 billion that states/localities nationwide received in 2024, \$2.7 billion (42 percent) was spent or committed (*i.e.*, formally approved or awarded under contracts and grants, even if not yet fully disbursed). Although the database is comprehensive, the researchers note that it relies on public records and, thus, cannot capture everything because all spending is not publicly reported. However, there is enough information to make general observations about governments' spending decisions thus far. The 2024 reported expenditures fit into the following categories:¹⁷

- **Treatment**, which includes medication for addiction treatment, inpatient and outpatient treatment, and counseling (18 percent of total spending, or \$486.8 million);
- **Recovery services**, which include warm handoff programs, housing, transportation, legal aid, peer support, and education and training for those in recovery (16.2 percent of total spending, or \$435.8 million);
- **Overdose reversal drugs**, including training on their proper administration and use (10.4 percent of total spending, or \$279.3 million);

⁹ National Opioids Settlement, "Frequently Asked Questions about the National Opioid Settlement," accessed September 2026, https://nationalopioidsettlement.com/faq-explanatory-charts/faq/#_ftnref7.

¹⁰ Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association, *Opioid Litigation Proceeds*.

¹¹ Distributor Settlement Agreement § V.B.2 (July 21, 2021; updated through Feb. 22, 2023), <https://nationalopioidsettlement.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Final-Distributor-Settlement-Agreement-3.25.22-Final-Exhibit-C-as-of-5.27.22-Exhibit-G-and-I-as-of-02.22.23.pdf> (mandating that any funds used for purposes other than opioid remediation be reported to the Settlement Fund Administrator and made available to the public, while leaving general remediation expenditures subject only to state-level reporting frameworks).

¹² Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association, *Opioid Litigation Proceeds*.

¹³ Aneri Pattani, "12 States Promised to Open the Books on Their Opioid Settlement Funds. We Checked Up on Them," *KFF Health News*, November 7, 2024, <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/state-opioid-settlement-funds-transparency-update/>.

¹⁴ Pattani, "12 States Promised."

¹⁵ Benjamin Eidman and Abigail Winiker, "2024 National Settlement Fund Tracking Project: What We Learned," Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, accessed September 2026, <https://opioidprinciples.jhsph.edu/2024-national-settlement-fund-tracking-project-what-we-learned/>. This report does not identify these states.

¹⁶ Aneri Pattani, "How Are States Spending Opioid Settlement Cash? We Built a Database of Answers," *KFF Health News*, December 16, 2024, <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/opioid-settlement-funds-detailed-database-state-county-city-spending/>; Eidman and Winiker, "2024 National Settlement Fund Tracking Project."

¹⁷ Eidman and Winiker, "2024 National Settlement Fund Tracking Project."

- **Prevention programs**, to both discourage the development of opioid use disorder (OUD) and to screen individuals for OUD (8.8 percent of total spending, or \$237.3 million);
- **Treatment for incarcerated populations**, including medication for OUD, counseling, and other in-facility treatment (3.2 percent of total spending, or \$86.4 million);
- **Syringe services programs** (2.9 percent of total spending, or \$78.6 million);
- **Data collection and research**, including gathering and analyzing addiction data, evaluation of settlement funds, and research into new treatments (2.7 percent of total spending, or \$73.6 million);
- **Pregnant and postpartum women** (1 percent of total spending, or \$25.3 million);
- **Neonatal abstinence syndrome treatment** (0.4 percent of total spending, or \$9.4 million);
- **Multiple strategies**, in which single expenditures fit more than one category (6.6 percent of total spending, or \$178.2 million); and
- **Other**, including spending on law enforcement, the addiction treatment workforce, administrative expenses, and other spending that cannot be tracked more specifically (30 percent of total spending, or \$808.5 million).

Because opioid settlement proceeds are distributed to many state and local jurisdictions and the categories of permissible expenditures are broad, there is room for significant variation and creativity in governments' spending decisions. Alabama, for instance, has directed funds towards grandparents who are raising grandchildren because of their parents' OUD, providing assistance to families who do not qualify for other programs like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families.¹⁸ The town of New Milford, Connecticut, set aside a portion of its funds to aid families who have lost loved ones to the opioid epidemic by paying for funeral costs.¹⁹ Oregon dedicated 30 percent of its settlement proceeds to nine tribal governments, recognizing that tribal communities had been disproportionately impacted by the opioid crisis.²⁰ Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, sought to help a neighborhood hurt by opioid addiction and trafficking by providing \$7.5 million for home repairs and eviction and foreclosure prevention.²¹ In Rhode Island, lawmakers earmarked \$2 million toward establishing overdose prevention centers, sites where people consume drugs in a safe location with medical professionals on hand and treatment and medical services available.²² Though state and local governments have latitude to use their funds for creative solutions, not every spending innovation has been approved by the legislature or other entity with expenditure approval. Kentucky's opioid commission reversed a decision to spend \$42 million on an experimental psychedelic drug to treat OUD, and Missouri's General Assembly voted down legislation to study the effectiveness of psilocybin for the same purpose after the state house initially passed the bill.²³

PUSHING THE BOUNDARIES OF "OPIOID REMEDIATION"

Some state and local governments have caused controversy by spending opioid settlement funds for purposes that are seemingly unrelated to opioid remediation. A significant portion of reported expenditures is explicitly not connected to past or future opioid remediation. This is permissible under most opioid settlements, which generally allow 15 percent of proceeds to be used in this fashion. However, the settlement agreements require that funds expended for purposes other than opioid remediation must be reported to the settlement administrator, and such reports must be made available to the public.²⁴ In 2022 and 2023, this amounted to \$240 million of non-opioid

¹⁸ Drew Hawkins, "'A Dream Come True': Alabama 'Grandfamilies' Are Set to Receive Opioid Settlement Funds," *MPB Online*, September 5, 2024, <https://www.mpbonline.org/blogs/news/a-dream-come-true-alabama-grandfamilies-are-set-to-receive-opioid-settlement-funds/>.

¹⁹ Kaitlin Keane, "New Milford Offers to Help Pay for Funerals of Those Who Die from Addictions: 'Powerful Support,'" *Register Citizen*, July 23, 2024, <https://www.registercitizen.com/newmilford/article/new-milford-opioid-funds-funeral-addictions-19567522.php>.

²⁰ Aimee Green, "Oregon Will Devote 30% of Its Share of Opioid Settlement Funds to Tribes," *Oregonian*, January 18, 2024, <https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2024/01/oregon-will-devote-30-of-its-share-of-opioid-settlement-funds-to-tribes.html>.

²¹ Jack Tomczuk, "Opioid Settlement Money to Be Used for Housing Assistance in Kensington," *Metro Philadelphia*, February 21, 2024, <https://metrophiladelphia.com/kensington-housing-opioid-settlement/>.

²² Breen, "Opioid Crisis Settlements."

²³ Morgan Watkins, "Kentucky Backs Away from Plan to Fund Opioid Treatment Research with Settlement Money," *NPR*, January 7, 2024, <https://www.npr.org/2024/01/11/1223380761/kentucky-backs-away-from-plan-to-fund-opioid-treatment-research-with-settlement->; Rebecca Rivas, "Bill Designed to Lower Suicide Rate of Missouri Veterans Awaits Action by Governor," *Missouri Independent*, May 28, 2024, <https://missouriindependent.com/2024/05/28/bill-designed-to-lower-suicide-rate-of-missouri-veterans-awaits-action-by-governor/>.

²⁴ National Opioids Settlement, "Distributor Settlement Agreement § V.B.2."

spending in 29 states.²⁵ Most of this category of spending went toward legal fees for opioid litigation, though some governments directed these proceeds to their general fund, or even to roads and bridges.²⁶

For the remaining 85 percent of settlement expenditures, issues can arise when the connection between the spending and opioid remediation is remote. Law enforcement agencies are deeply involved in combating the opioid epidemic, so it is logical that they have been the beneficiaries of settlement proceeds. A Kansas police department, for example, used \$195,000 of settlement funds to purchase a van and equipment for distributing naloxone and drug-testing equipment, an expenditure clearly targeted at opioid use.²⁷ Spending decisions are more controversial, however, when they look more like general law enforcement priorities than opioid remediation. One Alabama county used settlement funds to buy two new patrol vehicles, justifying the purchase by stating that the sheriff's office could provide transportation for individuals experiencing a substance use emergency.²⁸ Governments in Colorado and Connecticut spent tens of thousands of dollars on technology to help police unlock cell phone security features.²⁹ A county in Tennessee used settlement funds to make repairs and upgrades at local jails.³⁰ One Texas town purchased BolaWrap, a device to detain people by launching a Kevlar tether to wrap around their arms or legs, the manufacturers of which have marketed their product to police departments as a way to spend opioid settlement dollars.³¹ In Louisiana, which directs 20 percent of its settlement proceeds to sheriffs, a 2026 study found that about two-thirds of sheriff department spending was being used for purposes unrelated to opioid remediation.³²

This issue is not unique to law enforcement. One county in Kentucky used \$15,000 of its settlement proceeds to build an ice-skating rink as a place for drug-free fun, over the objections of local advocates who hoped for more funding for local treatment programs.³³ The Florida governor's office faced bipartisan backlash in the state legislature after spending \$4 million on advertisements against cannabis use,³⁴ and one New Jersey city spent \$600,000 on a series of concerts to "raise awareness" of the dangers of opioid addiction.³⁵

Another way state and local governments have pushed the boundaries of the intended purpose of settlement proceeds is by using the proceeds to replace funds previously allocated to existing opioid remediation programs and redirecting those funds to non-remediation expenditures. This practice, called supplantation, does not expand remediation efforts. Governments have used settlement funds to pay the salaries of current public health employees (freeing payroll funds to purchase a new ambulance) or to pay for an existing drug court (helping the government reduce its overall deficit).³⁶ As federal pandemic relief for states expires and Medicaid cuts come into effect, settlement funds have become an especially tempting solution for filling states' budget gaps.³⁷ During the period

²⁵ Pattani, "How Are States Spending Opioid Settlement Cash?"

²⁶ Pattani, "How Are States Spending Opioid Settlement Cash?"

²⁷ Kylie Cameron, "Opioid Settlement Money Is Meant to Fight Addiction. Kansas Gives a Lot of It to Police," *KMUW*, January 8, 2024, <https://www.kmuw.org/news/2024-01-08/opioid-settlement-money-is-meant-to-fight-addiction-kansas-gives-a-lot-of-it-to-police>.

²⁸ Aneri Pattani, "Using Opioid Settlement Cash for Police Gear like Squad Cars and Scanners Sparks Debate," *KFF Health News*, October 23, 2023, <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/using-opioid-settlement-cash-for-police-gear-like-squad-cars-and-scanners-sparks-debate/>.

²⁹ Roxanne Saucier et al., "How Are Opioid Settlement Funds Being Spent So Far?," *Health Affairs Forefront*, November 21, 2023, <https://www.healthaffairs.org/content/forefront/opioid-settlement-funds-being-spent-so-far>.

³⁰ Saucier et al., "How Are Opioid Settlement Funds Being Spent So Far?"

³¹ Kimberly Adams and Sarah Leeson, "As Opioid Settlement Funds Hit State Coffers, a Marketing Blitz Begins," *Marketplace*, January 15, 2024, <https://www.marketplace.org/2024/01/15/as-opioid-settlement-funds-hit-state-coffers-a-marketing-blitz-begins/>.

³² Aneri Pattani, "A State Gave Sheriffs 20% of Its Opioid Settlement Cash. We Followed the Money," *KFF Health News*, August 27, 2026, <https://kffhealthnews.org/public-health/louisiana-sheriffs-opioid-settlement-spending-addiction-law-enforcement/>.

³³ Aneri Pattani, "An Ice Rink to Fight Opioid Crisis: Drug-Free Fun vs. Misuse of Settlement Cash," *KFF Health News*, February 20, 2025, <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/ice-rink-opioid-crisis-payback-settlement-cash-prevention-carter-county-kentucky/>.

³⁴ Maureen Meehan, "DeSantis Faces Backlash for Using Opioid Settlement Funds on Anti-Cannabis Campaign," *Benzinga*, October 27, 2024, <https://www.benzinga.com/markets/cannabis/24/10/41564290/desantis-faces-backlash-for-using-opioid-settlement-funds-on-anti-cannabis-campaign>.

³⁵ Aneri Pattani, "Sock Hops and Concerts: How Some Places Spent Opioid Settlement Cash," *KFF Health News*, November 3, 2025, <https://kffhealthnews.org/public-health/opioid-settlements-addiction-sock-hops-concerts-mma-local-spending/>.

³⁶ Aneri Pattani, "Opioid Settlement Cash Being Used for Existing Programs and Salaries, Sparking Complaints," *USA Today*, April 15, 2024, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2024/04/15/opioid-settlements-existing-programs-salaries/73307854007/>.

³⁷ Aneri Pattani, "Opioid Cash Grab: As Federal Funding Dries Up, States Turn to Settlement Money," *KFF Health News*, February 25, 2025, <https://kffhealthnews.org/news/article/nevada-governor-budget-tanf-opioid-settlement-funds-supplantation/>.

between 2024 to 2026, Arizona transferred \$150 million from opioid settlement funds to the Arizona Department of Corrections.³⁸ In 2024, the Arizona Attorney General sued to stop the transfer, alleging that it was a violation of the settlement agreements, but the court permitted the allocation to proceed.³⁹ A subsequent audit showed that the department of corrections spent nearly \$51 million in opioid settlement funds but did not have “records supporting they were spent for approved purposes,” a finding which prompted the Arizona Attorney General to again contemplate a lawsuit against both the Arizona Legislature and governor.⁴⁰ In June 2025, the New Jersey Legislature passed a budget using \$45 million of opioid settlement dollars to offset Medicaid cuts to hospitals.⁴¹ Fourteen states—Connecticut, Delaware, Kansas, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Utah, Vermont, Virginia and Wisconsin—the District of Columbia, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the U.S. Virgin Islands have enacted policies or legislation to restrict the practice of supplantation of opioid settlement funds.⁴²

CHALLENGES IN SPENDING

State and local governments have encountered various challenges in determining how to spend their share of opioid litigation proceeds. Nationwide, out of the \$6.5 billion distributed in 2024, state and local governments allocated or spent just \$2.7 billion.⁴³ Although the ambiguous definition of “opioid remediation” has empowered some governments’ spending, as shown above, other jurisdictions have delayed or declined expenditures that they fear could be challenged as not squarely related to opioids. Wyoming counties began to receive settlement money in 2023, but 90 percent of those funds remained unspent as of April 2024, partially because local officials wanted to ensure that the expenditures were closely aligned with the settlement agreement requirements.⁴⁴ As of January 2026, however, the Wyoming Department of Health has received \$10.8 million for its share of settlement funds, nearly all of which has been allocated.⁴⁵ In Pennsylvania, one county sought to use opioid settlement funds to support public defenders, many of whom are overwhelmed with drug-related cases, but they abandoned the effort after looking into its legality.⁴⁶ County officials worried that the Pennsylvania Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust, which manages funds for all governments in the state, would penalize the choice by withholding future funding because of failure to adhere to the settlement agreement requirements.

In many states, opioid fund advisory boards are required by law to spend specified sums of the state’s share of the settlement money each year. For other states where the funds are subject to the ordinary appropriations process, such as in Iowa (prior to 2025), a mechanism to require that the funds be spent expeditiously does not exist. In 2024, the Iowa Legislature considered a bill that would have spent the state’s share of opioid settlement proceeds on treatment and prevention programs.⁴⁷ The bill ultimately failed, and the legislature did not approve an alternate spending plan before the end of the legislative session, leaving about \$50 million untouched in the state treasury for a full legislative cycle. In June 2025, the legislature passed a bill to create a formal allocation framework.⁴⁸

³⁸ Howard Fischer, “Mayes Weighs Challenge against Allegedly Misspent Opioid Settlement,” *Arizona Capitol Times*, May 21, 2026, <https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2026/05/21/mayes-weighs-challenge-against-allegedly-misspent-opioid-settlement/>.

³⁹ Fischer, “Mayes Weighs Challenge.”

⁴⁰ Fischer, “Mayes Weighs Challenge.”

⁴¹ Aneri Pattani, “Who’s Policing Opioid Settlement Spending? A Crowdsourced Database Might Help,” *KFF Health News*, July 11, 2025, <https://kffhealthnews.org/public-health/opioid-settlements-crowdsourced-database-monitor-spending-state-attorneys-general-oversight/>.

⁴² Legislative Analysis and Public Policy Association, *Opioid Litigation Proceeds*; Sarah Minster, “How Are Local Governments Investing Opioid Funds? The Supplantation Debate Explained,” *National League of Cities*, July 30, 2024, <https://www.nlc.org/article/2024/07/30/how-are-local-governments-investing-opioid-funds-the-supplantation-debate-explained/>.

⁴³ Eidman and Winiker, “2024 National Settlement Fund Tracking Project.”

Eidman and Winiker, “2024 National Settlement Fund Tracking Project.” Money Goes Unspent While Overdose Deaths Climb,” *WyoFile*, April 22, 2024, <https://wyofile.com/more-than-90-of-wyomings-opioid-settlement-money-goes-unspent-while-overdose-deaths-climb/>.

⁴⁵ Wyoming Department of Health, *Wyoming Statewide Share of Opioid Funds Report*, January 2026, <https://health.wyo.gov/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Wyoming-Statewide-Share-of-Opioid-Funds-January-2026.docx-1.pdf>.

⁴⁶ “Opioid Settlement Cash a Boon to Pa. Prosecutors but Public Defenders Are Being Turned Away,” *WHYY*, April 9, 2024, <https://whyy.org/articles/opioid-settlement-pennsylvania-prosecutors-public-defenders/>.

⁴⁷ Natalie Krebs, “Iowa Opioid Settlement Dollars Are Starting to Come In, but Most Remain Unspent,” *Iowa Public Radio*, July 2, 2024, <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/ipr-news/2024-07-02/iowa-opioid-settlement-dollars-are-starting-to-come-in-but-most-remain-unspent>.

⁴⁸ Iowa House File 1038, 91st Gen. Assem. (2025), <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/docs/publications/LGE/91/HF1038.pdf>.

For small local governments, one challenge is having too little settlement money to be able to spend it effectively. A national settlement agreement with one grocery chain defendant awarded one Michigan township a total of \$25.68 over ten years because of its small size.⁴⁹ Town officials concluded that paying staff to complete the paperwork to claim the funds would cost more than the proceeds, so they left the money untouched. Similarly, in Indiana, a small town that received \$9.10—not enough to buy a single box of naloxone—was one of 157 jurisdictions in the state to receive less than \$1,000 in total.⁵⁰ In this case, the 157 small distributions were later taken back and distributed at the county level instead. Other states have also employed this strategy of redirecting local government distributions below a certain dollar threshold to larger government units such as counties.⁵¹

One final challenge is that, even with governments' best efforts to make settlement funds available for local opioid remediation efforts, potential beneficiaries in communities may be unaware that they can access the money. Particularly with grant programs, public awareness is essential if governments want to ensure that the funds are actually spent. To that end, as of October 2025, 21 states had state-level dashboards about opioid litigation settlement funds.⁵² For example, Georgia established a comprehensive website for its Georgia Opioid Crisis Abatement Trust, providing potential applicants with information on available grants and a step-by-step guide for how to apply for funds.⁵³

CONCLUSION

As a result of the national opioid litigation settlements, large sums of money are pouring into the treasuries of state and local governments, and these payments will continue for nearly two decades. These governments have disbursed the funds in a variety of ways, focused particularly on treatment and recovery services. Challenges remain as jurisdictions balance competing priorities and decide how to use these resources to best serve their communities. The opioid settlements are not a dormant issue. In May 2026, the Purdue Pharma and Sackler family settlement went into effect, paying the first \$900 million of an agreed \$7.4 billion to state and local governments and to thousands of individual victims of opioids.⁵⁴ For many years to come, the governmental beneficiaries of opioid litigation funds will revisit and reevaluate their spending decisions in order to improve outcomes for individuals with, and communities affected by, OUD.

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⁴⁹ Robin Erb, "Some Opioid Settlement Funds May Sit Untouched in Michigan. Here's Why," *Bridge Michigan*, August 9, 2024, <https://www.bridgemi.com/michigan-health-watch/some-opioid-settlement-funds-may-sit-untouched-michigan-heres-why>.

⁵⁰ Whitney Downard, "State, Localities Start to Spend the \$507 Million from National Opioids Settlement," *Indiana Capital Chronicle*, November 13, 2023, <https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2023/11/13/state-localities-start-to-spend-the-507-million-from-national-opioid-settlement/>.

⁵¹ Downard, "State, Localities Start to Spend."

⁵² National Academy for State Health Policy, "State Opioid Settlement Spending Decisions," updated October 1, 2025, <https://nashp.org/state-tracker/state-opioid-settlement-spending-decisions/>.

⁵³ Georgia Opioid Crisis Abatement Trust, "Resources for Applicants," accessed February 18, 2025, <https://www.gaopioidtrust.org/for-applicants/resources/>. For other state dashboards, see National Academy for State Health Policy, "State Opioid Settlement Spending Decisions."

⁵⁴ Maryland Attorney General, "Attorney General Brown Announces Purdue-Sackler \$7.4 Billion Opioid Settlement to Go into Effect," news release, May 1, 2026, [https://oag.maryland.gov/News/pages/Attorney-General-Brown-Announces-Purdue-Sackler-\\$7.4-Billion-Opioid-Settlement-To-Go-Into-Effect.aspx](https://oag.maryland.gov/News/pages/Attorney-General-Brown-Announces-Purdue-Sackler-$7.4-Billion-Opioid-Settlement-To-Go-Into-Effect.aspx).

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